PROJECT MONGMARA

DISCOVER A GREEN SPINE OF ELEPHANT HERDS AND PROUD VILLAGES IN INDIA’S LUSH NORTHEAST — AND HOW YOU COULD SAVE IT THROUGH OUR NEW APPEAL

Inside this issue

FIVE YEARS, 2.5 MILLION ACRES

PAGES 8-11: WLT people discuss our Strategic Plan to save millions of acres of habitats by 2025 — and how WLT supporters like you can help

Plus the Colombian, Kenyan, Zambian reserves protected by WLT supporters this season
Dr Catherine Barnard, WLT CEO

It feels like it was only yesterday that all of us at WLT sat down to take stock of our supporters’ extraordinary impact in 2021 – the 139,470 acres saved, the 115,758 trees funded, and more – and yet the first months of 2022 have flown by once more, bringing forth a dizzying wave of new conservation successes funded by donations to WLT.

There is, as you’ll be discovering in this WLT News edition, something for everyone this season: the reserve expansions, trees planted in their thousands, species comebacks and court victories made possible by donations to our programmes and appeals (see this page and next); the boundless generosity of the WLT legacy givers who stopped at nothing to help us protect life-packed tropical forests in Ecuador (see back cover); and many other stories of conservation action.

These successes are the best inspiration WLT could hope for as we continue to scale up our work. As part of this issue (see pages 8-11), WLT team members explain why our plan to save millions of acres by 2025 is so important, and how you can help, starting with supporting our new appeal (see pages 4-7) to expand a crucial network of elephant corridors in India.

Together, if WLT supporters like you join us, we can and will be big enough to make a difference against biodiversity loss in this decade that will prove decisive for life on our planet.

When land is saved, species thrive and so it has proven with our ‘Saving the Barbacoas’ appeal from 2020. Jaguars, Pumas, Lowland Pacas and Collared Peccaries have all been spotted during our partner FBC’s recent patrols and camera feeds, as well a magnificent bird (Roseate Spoonbill) that had never been recorded before at El Silencio – a sign of a flourishing landscape.

Looking to fund the next conservation good news story?
Donations to our Action Fund will support urgent land purchases, anti-fire kit and others wherever they’re most needed. Visit worldlandtrust.org/donate for more info.

NEWS FROM A SEASON OF CONSERVATION MILESTONES

Action Fund supporters join alliance to more than double Kenyan reserve

Progress for elephant corridor rewilded by Plant a Tree supporters

Species sightings showcase impact of Colombia appeal supporters

Zambia’s Kasanka National Park is home to the last surviving elephant population in the Upper Congo system. Earlier this year, Action Fund donations helped to deliver a court order banning habitat destruction by two firms around the park until the legal case can be resolved – handing our partner Kasanka Trust precious time to mount a fight for this biodiversity gem of Africa.

Sokoke Scops Owls (pictured), Clarke’s Weaver birds and the Golden-rumped Elephant Shrew – this Endangered trio of eastern Africa’s coastal forests has been offered a lifeline after new WLT partner A Rocha Kenya expanded their Dakatcha Reserve from 1,517 acres to 3,797 acres, with help from Action Fund supporters and many other partner organisations.

44,000 saplings funded by Plant a Tree supporter donations were planted in 2021 at India’s D’ering-Dibru Saikhowa corridor, and elephants and tigers were not the only ones to benefit. Hundreds of people joined a festival last year for a project by our partner WTI that will keep wildlife away from crops and compensate villages through sustainable livelihoods.

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Mary McEvoy, WLT Carbon Programme Manager

“To our Action Fund supporters – thank you for helping to deliver this injunction and the time it buys to secure a firm, final court order that keeps Kasanka safe. All of us at WLT will continue to add our voice to Kasanka Trust’s to help ensure that outcome.”

Mary McEvoy, WLT Carbon Programme Manager

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Project Mongma Rama
Our appeal to expand elephant corridors in India

At India’s Garo Hills, WLT supporters have already shown the power of conservation. Since 2003, donations to us have helped to protect thousands of hectares of elephant corridors, and now there is a chance to safeguard thousands more. This is the story of an extraordinary landscape, its unique life and people – and how you could write the next chapter of a conservation success by donating to our new appeal.

A visitor to Meghalaya would quickly grasp why this Indian state’s name translates as 'meat' or ‘abode of the clouds’ in Sanskrit. The world’s rainiest region is home to dense forest canopy, overhead fogs that rise from the Bangladesh delta plains to the south, a paradise where Asian Elephant herds wade swollen streams, Clouded leopard stalk prey from up tall subtropical trees, and the duet calls of Western Hoolock Gibbon pairs echo across the lush valleys.

This landscape’s magnificence masks its vulnerability. Meghalaya falls within one of the most threatened biodiversity hotspots on Earth (the Indo-Burma) and new infrastructure could expose the landscape to new dangers. The opening of roads risks breaching projects to move the area’s rich mineral deposits and with it, the ancestral landscape and way of life of Garo people – the communities who call themselves A’chik Mande and who migrated to the area from Tibet around 400 BC – could change beyond return.

In 2003, WLT and our partner Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) formed an alliance to safeguard this landscape. The resulting Garo Green Spine project has since operated on a simple premise – the Garo people form reserves to conserve their own land and benefit as a result – but its impact has been profound: 4,000 ha (9,884 acres) have been protected across three crucial elephant corridors, while 20 villages have joined an initiative that has given them support to healthcare and sustainable development, computer centres, teachers, bridges and more.

WTL supporters have made this work possible since 2003 and you could play a decisive part now. Your donations to our new appeal this year will fund the following outcomes from 2021 to 2026: the protection of 2,000 ha through community-run reserves and key biodiversity areas; the restoration of 170 ha through the planting of 1,250,000 native trees; and the enlisting of at least three watchers from the local community. From 2021 to 2030, your donations will also allow WTI to bring a further 15,000 ha under biodiversity-friendly community plans.

And that’s not all. Because WTI has secured complementary funding from a corporate supporter of theirs, the overall impacts from the project will go further. Combined, WLT and non-WLT funds will allow WTI to protect a total of 4,000 ha through community-run reserves; restore a total of 400 ha through a total of 300,000 native trees; hire a total of five watchers from local communities; and bring a total of 35,000 ha under biodiversity-friendly community plans.

“Donations from WLT supporters will make a real impact,” says Upasana Ganguly, who heads WTI’s ‘Right of Passage: Elephant Corridors’ Project. “These new acres are the only corridor left that links the entire Garo spine. With your help, we could connect the whole landscape for elephants and other species to travel safely.”

The next chapter after two decades of transformative impact for elephants and communities

Those part of the Garo Green Spine project have had ample chance to see exactly how vital an elephant home this is. “Garo’s position along the India-Bangladesh border makes it crucial for the herds travelling between both countries, so protecting forest here will have a big impact,” says Sunil Kyaorang, WTI’s Garo project lead since 2003. “This is part of an area that supports 1,000 breeding elephants so we see them almost every day. Each sighting is full of excitement, and wonder.”

And yet unlike elsewhere in India, high elephant numbers do not translate into high human-wildlife conflict; the forest left in Garo is enough for herds and villages to each have the space they need, Upasana says. And it’s not just elephants: the Garo Hills host 206 bird species, 62 reptile species, and 124 fish species. They’re the home of 85 mammal species and one of the world’s few remaining matschis, a primate that has not been seen until recently. So, while WTI’s Garo Green Spine project helps to save the animals, it also helps to save the culture of festivals, gastronomy and matrilineal societies and boast a rich mineral deposits and with it, the ancestral landscape and way of life of Garo people – the communities who call themselves A’chik Mande and who migrated to the area from Tibet around 400 BC – could change beyond return.

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With help from your donations, the Garo people will set aside part of the land they own for conservation and benefit in the process. Through this project, our partner WTI has already delivered since 2003 school computer centres (left), bee-keeping training (centre), free health checks (right) and more.
JOIN US TO EXTEND A CRUCIAL CORRIDOR FOR ELEPHANTS

The Garo Green Spine project has proven that when conservation is led by communities who own the land, everyone thrives. Since 2003, 20 villages have joined together with WTI to set aside thousands of hectares for wildlife – and benefited through improved livelihoods, health clinics and more. If you join us, together we can write the next chapter of this conservation success story. Head online (worldlandtrust.org) or use the Donation Form we’ve sent you to donate to our appeal, help our partner WTI protect thousands more hectares in India in the next five years!

A Tibeto-Burman ethnic group with its own language, the Garo people have lived in this landscape for millennia. Your donations will allow them to protect their ancestral land and benefit through support to livelihoods that don’t cost the forest.

Meghalaya (Sanskrit for ‘abode of the clouds’), the world’s rainiest region, features a dense canopy over foothills rising between Bangladesh and the Himalayas. Your appeal donations will protect forests teeming with hundreds of species.
FIVE YEARS, 2.5 MILLION ACRES
How you could help us meet our WLT Strategic Plan targets

World Land Trust (WLT)’s impact as a conservation organisation has already soared in recent years, and last year we raised our ambition and are aiming to save another 2.5 million acres in just five years. Why is the Trust pushing for such exponential growth, and why now?

Dr Catherine Barnard: We’ve got to accept that the challenges aren’t going away; if anything it’s the opposite. World leaders’ failure to meet biodiversity targets in 2010 and 2020 has cost us decades, and with climate change the years of talking have to build new ones too. We will need to attract and retain the best people out there, building a bigger organisation able to deliver bigger impact.

But without our supporters, we can’t make a difference on the ground. Over the decades we’ve gained the trust of thousands and thousands of people and businesses. These existing supporters are right to trust us but we’ve got to maintain that trust by continuing to communicate the impact of their donations in new, inspiring ways. And we need new supporters too; there are countless people and organisations out there who would support a plan to save millions of acres for posterity, and our priority will be to work hard so we can find them.

As WLT seeks to rapidly scale up its conservation impact around the world, how will we make sure the protection of vast tracts of land benefits local communities? Why does this matter?

Mark: To be effective in the long run, conservation has to involve and be driven by the people on the ground. That’s why WLT operates through local partners: because they’re the best people to put forward conservation projects that listen to and incorporate the views and needs of local communities. Getting that right is a big part of what WLT partners do.

Catherine: I wholeheartedly agree. WLT operates on the principle that local people hold the solutions to local problems, so ownership of habitats. Owning something pretty much protects it forever; that’s why we buy houses to live in, and that’s what wildlife needs too. The solution really is that straightforward but the challenge is to roll it out at scale – and that is precisely what WLT is setting out to do.

The WLT Strategic Plan requires the Trust to fund the protection of as much land between 2021 and 2025 as it funded in its prior 10-plus years of operations. How will WLT ensure these ambitious targets are met in the space of a few years?

Catherine: Nothing happens without people. I see WLT as a catalyst that brings people together around the world to make positive action happen for the planet. So it’s about investing in our own organisation and our partners – our goal is to fund £12m of conservation partner projects per year by 2025 – as well as making it easy for our supporters to take action. Our Strategic Plan sets indicators across finance, storytelling and many more areas so that we can deliver, measure and report the impact we’ve promised our supporters.

As a charity, WLT acts as a unique bridge, we help supporters like you make a difference by using your donations to fund our partners’ great conservation projects. There is so much you can do. It could be doing a sponsored litter clean-up in your area to raise a few pounds, or supporting conservation and carbon projects so that your company can meet its net-zero goal. No matter the size of your contribution, collectively your impact will be as great as it needs to be. We’ve got the solutions and the people to fund and deploy them – let’s make it happen.

Mark: Absolutely! We need great partners working with great staff and supported by great supporters. There are three links in the chain. WLT already has strong partnerships across the world and we will have to build new ones too. We will need to attract and retain the best people out there, building a bigger organisation able to deliver bigger impact.

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Do you have any questions about how WLT will reach its goal to bring 2.5 million acres under protection by 2025? Head to our website to read the WLT Strategic Plan in full, or email us at donations@worldlandtrust.org to request a copy or ask any questions you may have about our targets and how you could help us meet them.

As ambitious as they are, WLT’s targets come against a backdrop of sweeping planetary crises. What would you say to people out there wondering whether supporting this WLT Strategic Plan can make the necessary impact?

Mark: Having worked in conservation for over three decades, I know it feels like we don’t always win. But if we lose at times, it’s not because we don’t know what to do, we know, we’re just not doing enough of it. WLT can’t save the entire natural world or turn things around for conservation, climate and communities all on our own, but we can and will be an agent of change that allows you to make even more of a difference in the coming years. To win, we must try, and WLT is going to try its hardest.

I can’t put it better than WLT Patron Sir David Attenborough: donating to WLT is one of the most effective things you can do to conserve wildlife around the world. That’s why conservation is such a big part of what WLT partners do. It’s about investing in our own organisation and our partners – our goal is to fund £12m of conservation partner projects per year by 2025 – as well as making it easy for our supporters to take action. Our Strategic Plan sets indicators across finance, storytelling and many more areas so that we can deliver, measure and report the impact we’ve promised our supporters.

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Our resources are directed to projects and reach climate change goals. ambition to protect biodiversity and help protected by 2030 and the “Half-Earth” supports global efforts for such actions more ambitious, and WLT’s Strategic Plan only solution is to be bigger, bolder and important gains that we have made. The biodiversity loss is outstripping the those of many other organisations, global over 30 years, but despite our efforts and WLT must act. The world and the life it A look at the latest evidence shows we at threats and loss both WLT has been at the forefront of protecting land and the biodiversity and ecosystems that these areas support for over 30 years, but despite our efforts and those of many other organisations, global biodiversity loss is outstripping the important gains that we have made. The only solution is to be bigger, bolder and more ambitious, and WLT’s Strategic Plan supports global efforts for such actions including the “30 x 30” initiative for 30% of the earth’s land and sea areas to be protected by 2030 and the “Half-Earth” ambition to protect biodiversity and help reach climate change goals. With biodiversity threats and loss both growing, we’re using science to make sure our resources are directed to projects and areas that will have the greatest positive impact. WLT’s past and current projects already fall into the well-known criteria such as “biodiversity hotspots”, “key biodiversity areas” and “centres of plant diversity” and going forward, our WLT Strategic Plan sets out two main approaches for conservation. The first, reactive approach will see WLT continue to focus on the most at-risk, irreplaceable world areas where large number of species with small ranges occur. Developed by people including Professor Stuart Pimm, a world-leading scientist who heads up a charity (Saving Nature) WLT collaborates with, this approach prioritises habitats where even small land acquisitions can be crucial in preventing extinctions of many species, such as the Atlantic Forest in Brazil or Western Ghats of India. The second, more proactive approach will see WLT safeguard intact areas of habitat before these become under threat, working at a landscape scale to protect or connect large areas for the wide-ranging species these ecosystems support. Local people will continue to play a key role. We were one of the first organisations to place habitat protection in the hands of local conservationists and communities who know it best. Going forward we’ll strive to maintain that support to our local partners and not just by funding land acquisitions: we’ll help them with their capacity and the long-term sustainability of their projects. Where communities are key stakeholders of the projects we support, we will ensure that our funding helps our partners to involve local people, as this is the only way to ensure the long-term viability of these sites. Together, WLT and our conservation partners around the world share the focus to urgently protect the areas of the planet with the highest biodiversity value, and the ambition to ensure habitat protection makes the impact it needs to make for conservation, communities and our global climate. There is a huge amount of work to do, and limited time to achieve our goals, but with your support we will work to protect every acre we can. Working at WLT has been a dream of mine since attending a presentation about WLT’s incredible work at my previous organisation, the BTO. But my background is in marketing, not conservation, so how could I make a difference? Today, I am extremely fortunate to facilitate the protection of our planet on a global scale, working with companies, grant providers and supporters like you to galvanise and direct support to projects that we know will have the greatest impact for the future of our world. Just a few months after joining WLT in 2020, I witnessed the kind of transformative action WLT can set in motion for the planet when everyone comes together. One by one, every part of the WLT supporter movement rose to help our partner Fundación Jocotoco save some of the last 2% of Ecuador’s Chocó forests: the trusts, foundations and generous donors who helped us build a £250,000 matchpot, and the driven businesses, trusts, foundations and individuals – including the readers of this newsletter – who then made it possible to reach our £500,000 target during Big Match Fortnight, later surging on to raise a final £925,000. Our aim was to fund the protection of 1,668 acres of Chocó rainforest but together we funded an incredible 4,843 acres! That feeling – the sheer strength of collective action for nature – has stayed with me ever since, and it is what convinces me that we will meet the ambitious targets in our Strategic Plan. We will save millions of acres more by 2025 together because that is exactly the power our supporters have. We will make the necessary impact against climate change and biodiversity loss because we’ve got a method that works: our partners’ purchase and protection of land; for posterity, for the benefit of all on the planet. Our plan to scale up does not come from nowhere – it builds on 32 years of success. These targets represent a future of rapid growth for WLT, and this starts with integrity. We will pursue some of the big brands with an unmatched power to make a difference. However, through meticulous due diligence, we will only work with those that share our values; those with a genuine commitment towards sustainability and net zero. Every individual and organisation who supports us will be making more than just a donation; you will be making an investment in the future of the planet, and a return that goes beyond the immediate action being funded. The £5 you donate to Plant a Tree will not just fund a native sapling, but also a home for wildlife and tree nursery jobs for local people. The businesses donating to Carbon Balanced are not just offsetting their carbon footprint; they’re protecting the rainforest and funding livelihoods for local people. The supporters of our Buy an Acre and Keepers of the Wild programmes are not just funding acres and rangers – they’re ensuring local people can safeguard the habitats that future generations will need. This is our commitment to you: through us, you will deliver the necessary impact against biodiversity loss and climate change; problems that can often seem too vast a problem for any one person to tackle. Together, we’ve already shown what the solutions are, what hope looks like. We hope that you will be joining us in a journey for the planet where every WLT supporter, big or small, will play a decisive part.
A conservation movement of people
The WLT supporters giving nature a new chance this season

When we remember a charity in our will, we do so knowing that the gift we leave behind will protect the world of tomorrow. That’s the decision long-term WLT supporter Denyss Wilsden made many years ago. We are now truly humbled to announce that Denyss’s generous legacy gift has enabled our partner Fundación Jocotoco (FJ) to bring 884 acres (358 ha) of Ecuadorian cloud forest under protection.

Denyss made many donations to WLT in his time, almost all of them to support our projects in Ecuador. It’s easy to see why: although little larger than the UK, Ecuador is a place of stunning biodiversity, with almost 1,700 bird species (17% of the world’s total) and 16,000 plant species, a quarter of which are found nowhere else. Ever an admirer of FJ’s work in the country, Denyss specified that his legacy gift be used to support our partner, with whom WLT have worked since 2003.

Denyss is the only person we have ever made a lifetime WLT Friend and now his legacy will live on in the expansion of FJ’s Buenaventura Reserve to 9,143 acres (3,700 ha) in total, a gift of habitat protection for the home of Critically Endangered monkeys like the Ecuadorian White-fronted Capuchin and 360 bird species. As Anne Clifford, WLT Partnerships Manager (Major Giving), puts it: “Denyss was a familiar voice on the phone for many years, and his encouraging letters of support were always accompanied by generous donations for WLT’s work. It’s wonderful that his enthusiasm to protect Ecuador’s wilderness can now be remembered in the rich forest of Buenaventura and its El Ono Parakeets.”

When WLT supporters remember us in their will, they gift a legacy of habitat protection to species – like Denyss Wilsden did for the Jaguarundi of Ecuador.

Farewell partnership: Free will-writing service now available by phone

Like so many other WLT supporters, you too could gift a living planet to future generations and with will-writing service Farewill, it has never been easier to do so.

Under our partnership we’ve already been offering our supporters in England and Wales a free, straightforward process to write your wills online (you can do so by following this link www.farewill.com/wlt-news). Now you can also do it by phone, and this service is open to our supporters in Scotland too.

To use our new phone service, you can call Farewill on 020 8050 2686, letting their Customer Support team know you are a World Land Trust supporter. You can also book a free call-back online by visiting www.farewill.com/wlt-phone. Farewill will then help you every step of the way.

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